



AUBURY VICTOR BADGER

AND

THE BMH SPECIAL

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INTRODUCTION.



Aubury with Joan and Francine, on holiday.

Aubury Badger would have wished that he be remembered. (Yes he was like that!) In fact, he was very much a tall talking man. Because of this and that he was revered as a fierce competitor, I have taken on this task to have his memory kept alive. This year (1996) he would have been 90 years of age, a lot of memories have been lost as his family and friends advance in years, I fear that by his 100th year more will be gone and only the written history will survive. I therefore ask if any one knows more of this man and his antics or has any photographs or memorabilia of him and his adventures that they send them to me for inclusion in this continuing story of the man and his machines.

Many thanks to those whom have contributed so far to the research of this man and his machine especially: Francine Covell, Joan Badger, Colin Campbell, Sonny Raymond, Roger Podmore, Leo Naughton, Ray Mountenay, Keith Lucy, Neville(now Dec) and Judy Hammond, Peter Hammond, Evan Verge, Don Reimann, Don Hall, Don Goldsmith, David Hartly, Les Allert, Ron Posselt, Len Beavis, Northam Historical Society and the investigations team at the Registrar Generals Office.

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AUBURY BADGER AND THE BMH SPECIAL

Aubury Victor Badger was an influential but bombastic character who lived much of his working life in the Northam district and was well known as the local Holden Dealer from 1948 through to the mid 70's.

He was born in a flat opposite the gates at Fremantle Prison on the 12th of July 1906. He had a brother Vaughan, and two sisters, Alberta and Elmey. His father was the Superintendent at Fremantle Prison and his mother was a Matron at Fremantle. As we are often a product of our upbringing, it may be fair to say that Aubury's upbringing, shaped his personality. He was by nature strict, but a fair man. He was a gentleman but one not to be on the wrong side of. He loved to be in the limelight and always busy. He loathed people who were not timely and prompt.



Aubury enjoying one of his favorite sports – fishing.

As a businessman, his clients regarded him as a man who would always do a fair deal and he never duped a buyer. Some would say that this was a rare trait in the motor trade. He was a keen sportsman and loved fishing and water sports. His most favored fishing spot was Rocky Point. As a fisherman he was relaxed and peaceful.

He was a speed freak, everywhere he went he went flat out. Many would not get into a motor car with him. A story relayed to me centered around a hitchhiker whom he stopped for on the road side, upon recognising the driver the would-be passenger refused to get in the car, and added that he needed to get home but, “not with you, Aubury”!

To work for he was a good boss, he had many long term employees. All speak highly of him, he was a hard boss and tendered to be blunt, straight forward and to the point. If you were a hard worker and a quality tradesman then you had no troubles. If you were not, he could be difficult and short-tempered.

Much of Aubury's early life is unknown, He was raised in the early years at the prison, later in life it was light-heartily promoted that he was the Hanging J.P. His family moved to Broome in his early life. He had fond memories of his childhood in Broome. Aubury was a talented man and taught ballroom dancing in his younger days. His appearance was always immaculate. He served in Papua New Guinea and upon return from the war, he operated a small workshop in Fremantle. He was the Service Manager for Sydney Atkinsons in Perth for some time; and then in 1948, moved to Northam to set up the franchise for the new Holden Car which was soon to be released. This made him the Chevrolet, Cadillac, Pontiac and Holden dealer for the town and surrounding districts, taking over the franchise from Leathead and Taswell - whom were the dealer from 1942 to 1948. Before this Beavis Bros. were the agents for Chevrolet and prior to that Withnell Motors who are now the Holden dealer. Charles Trevor Beavis, the principal of Beavis Motors, whom picked up the Winterbottoms and ultimately the BMC agency got his own back on Aubury by winning the 1965 Mayoral election in Northam.

The business started in small leased premises in the town with a staff of four, a mechanic, a receptionist, a parts man and Aubury. It then moved to the corner site just over the bridge in Fitzgerald St. Northam opposite the flourmill where it continued until 1983.

The other GM products were marketed in the district by Luscombe Motors, and their principal Mr John Luscombe (dec.). John Luscombe was a competitor both in business and in sport in the town; they were friends however, and ultimately the two companies merged in 1980 to form a single GM outlet trading as LB Motors. This business ultimately failed in 1983 - but long after Aubury had retired from the motor industry. In it's heyday it employed 38 staff and had full facilities including a panel and paint shop. Aubury and his family moved when he retired in the mid 70's to Dunsborough and lived there until returning to Booragoon to be close to his birthplace in 1975. When he retired the business was taken on and managed by Frank Mountenay whom was the Sales Manager for Aubury for many years. The Premises is still occupied by a long term employee of Badger Motors - Sonny Raymond, and one of Aubury's apprentices Roger Podmore

Aubury passed away on December 8th 1985 and left a legacy of memories for his friends. He is mostly remembered as absolutely tenacious and fearless behind the wheel of anything that went around and made a noise. He pushed every piece of machinery to the limit. It didn't matter if it was a bike, a boat, or a car - everywhere he went was at full throttle. Many remember travelling from Northam to Perth or return in early Holden's at 95 MPH, often on the wrong side of the road, around corners in the dirt, and overtaking on blind crests. He loved boats and drove speedboats to

the limit Many would not ski behind a boat driven by Aubury for fear that falling off would be certain death. In a racecar he was ruthless, bordering on insane. Many recall his one wheel antics in FX Holden's in the "around the houses" in Northam. Lap after lap he would circulate and on a particular corner he would have the Holden on the limits of adhesion of the front wheel as the others went in the air. Some of his competitors say that for this reason he was not a good driver, some say he was dangerous. His race record in sedan racing shows that this was possibly not the case as he was the 1955 Sedan Car State Champion.



Aubury in action at Caversham. Note the famous No. 3 number plate.



Francine & Jacqueline riding a gift from their

father. They were actively involved with his work and life.

Some parts of his life were tragic. Relationships were difficult and he was married twice, his first marriage was to June Irvine whom was a dancing teacher in Fremantle. They had a daughter Jacqueline whom he retained custody of after divorcing his wife. By all accounts she was very attractive and drove a white MG. She had purchased the car without her father's knowledge, which caused a great amount of decent at the time. His daughter Jackie died early in life and this possibly changed him greatly in his later years. His heart was broken. This did not stop him from being caring. He married the second

time in Northam to Joan and his new family, which included a daughter Francinne, were actively

involved with his work and life. He made friends easily, was always charitable, his generosity was legendary Many speak fondly of his great "Badger's Picnics" at Rockingham, he handed out presents to all of the employees' children and provided all on the entertainment and provided a spread for all comers - they are remembered fondly by all. He was an active man in the community with involvement in many sporting and community clubs, groups and associations. He was president of the Northam branch of the RSL and became the District Vice President. He was President of the Sporting Car Club and the Northam Car Club, a Justice of the Peace, President of the Western Australian branch of the Confederation of Australian Motor Sport and was actively involved with Legacy.

Aubury started his motor racing career on bikes, but changed over to open wheeler cars racing a Chevrolet based special. The car was fitted with a Chevrolet 6-cylinder engine, mid 30's Chevrolet front axle, gearbox, and differential. Other features were 17' wheels, Huck brakes and manual supplementary fuel pump. This car was reputed to be quite heavy and under powered and was quickly modified. The car was re-powered, and eventually replaced with a purpose built car. Some conjecture exists as to whether this car formed the basis of the BMH special or was a different vehicle altogether. The remains of a special were located in the mid 70's and they may be the remains of Aubury's first special. (now confirmed to be the Badger Special Chevrolet)

In 1952, Aubury and two other members of his staff began construction of a racecar, which became known as the BMH special. Many believed the name to be an acronym for Badger Motors Holden - but this is not true. It is Badger, Mariner and Hammond. The three are well known identities involved with the construction of the car. Being:- Aubury Badger, Bill Mariner (dec.) and Neville Hammond (Dec 2009). Aubury was the main driver and principal, Bill his panel beating shop manager and Neville his workshop manager. Many of his employees were involved with the construction of the car. Other locals were also involved. The car was completed in early 1953 with a peculiar body built by Bill Mariner and painted bright yellow by one of his tradesman Don Goldsmith. The body was steel framed and covered by sheet steel and included a peak or tail behind the drivers head. It rapidly obtained the nickname of the "Comic Book Special". The



The famous BMH Special in action at Caversham – with Aubury at the wheel.

peak/tail was removed soon after, as it caused a great amount of stability problems at high speed on the main straight at Caversham. It raced on several occasions carrying the number 9 and was mainly driven by Aubury, but on two occasions was driven by Stan Clements (dec.). A story is around that Aubury told Stan that he had driven the car now on two separate occasions, the first being his first and the second being his last! It was a heavy car weighing in at over half a ton. Aubury often claimed the Holden engine was the weak point even in the passenger car, he claimed it wouldn't rev as required. Many believed it to be capable of 6000 RPM but reliable sources claim that it always exploded at around 5000 RPM. It was reputed to be the first car to record 110 MPH on the main straight at Caversham.

Judging by the photographs that exist, it would be fair to say that the man knew all of the limits of the car because he had explored them all. He certainly had a guardian angel. There seems to be no record of him having any accidents either on the road or track until many years after he retired when he was involved in an incident when he blew a tyre at high speed - the resulting road accident broke his leg. Some speak of his ability at knowing when to back off as though he had a sixth sense or had someone on his shoulder looking after him. He was a hell raiser and drove cars over the double white lines on blind corners and crests of hills with the utmost confidence that all was well. To avoid a head on collision he would put the car into a high-speed slide and "U" turn. A story relayed to me goes that - on a trip to Perth to bring drivers down to collect new cars for delivery, that he complained that the new EK Holden wasn't any good because he was having trouble overtaking an earlier model FJ on the road out of Clackline. The other car was only doing 80 MPH! Considering the road conditions of the day, and that his car had five occupants, it probably wasn't much of a surprise. It may also come as no surprise that Aubury had a lot of trouble getting drivers to come to Perth with him to drive back the new cars, the pay rate of £1/-/- was "never enough to buy the toilet paper" many proclaimed.



The BMH in the pits at Caversham.

The BMH car competed in the 1955 and 1956 Flying Fifty at Northam and was an entrant in the 1957 Australian Grand Prix at Caversham. It was never fully developed. It was built from mostly Holden components hobbled together in the Badger Motors workshop in Northam. It was a distinctive car for many reasons, as it was bright yellow and often driven sideways. CAMS tried in vain to correct, what they say was poor driving habits, on the track - that is his three wheeling vehicles around the streets. The upshot of it was that there was little they could do as he hadn't come unstuck and they were not prepared to ban him from the track. Aubury competed in many events including the first 1000-mile trial in South Australia with Don Reimann. He finished his racing career in sedans.

The remains of the BMH car have not been located, conjecture exists as to the cars final resting place. Some say it went to Kalgoorlie, and then to Esperance as a speedway car; others believe the car was broken down and scrapped, whilst others believe the car went to Bunbury or Albany. It would be a tidy conclusion to the story of this man's life to confirm the ultimate destiny of the BMH Special, and if it still survives restore it to it's former glory for a fitting memorial of the man.

The BMH is of course now a complete and operational racing car after items lost were recreated